

Concept Intro: Collective Efficacy

Did you know that talking with your neighbors or using the local grocery store can make your neighborhood safer?

In both rural and urban areas across the country, some neighborhoods remain safe while others with remarkably similar demographics face chronic crime and disorder. Research has found neighborhoods that are resistant to these types of challenges often show much higher levels of community sentiment, whether this is due to the confidence residents have in their neighbors (called “collective efficacy”) or their everyday interactions with the community and its institutions (called “social cohesion”).

Strengthening community bonds is usually a gradual process, but it can be accelerated through partnerships that connect residents with each other and to community figures and police officers. By engaging residents in a problem-solving process, their attitudes about the neighborhood can shift when they perceive that they are making a positive impact. This could be something as small as helping a fellow neighbor in need or participating in an event to clean up a schoolyard. And if residents believe police are performing their duties in a fair manner and upholding the integrity of the criminal justice system, they start to view them in a more favorable light, too. Once a newfound trust has been established, it can increase residents’ willingness to act as neighborhood guardians and fuel cooperation among organizations, local businesses, police, and residents to work together towards a vision of a safer community.

Key Terms

Capacity building—the ability to generate a wealth of resources and people to carry out initiatives that help produce measurable results.

Collective efficacy—the willingness of residents to maintain order in their communities. Often a key element is how effective neighbors interact with one another and reinforce prosocial behaviors

Social cohesion—how connected residents are to their neighborhood. Characteristics that work to build social cohesion include stable levels of home ownership, established relationships among neighbors, and accessibility to resources and services.

Sustainability—the ability to allocate resources that promote the long-term vitality of a community.

The BCJI Approach

These powerful themes run through all BCJI projects.

DATA-DRIVEN

BCJI targets crime hot spots – often streets, properties or public spaces in communities that have struggled with crime for years. Researchers are engaged in the day-to-day work, helping partners examine problems, assess evidence-based solutions, and monitor progress.

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED:

BCJI champions active roles for residents in identifying problems, selecting strategies and creating safe and healthy environments.

SPURS REVITALIZATION:

BCJI tackles problem properties, unsafe streets and parks, unemployment, transit barriers and service gaps related to crime.

BUILDS PARTNERSHIPS:

BCJI taps the resources of public, nonprofit and community leaders to bring more resources and different approaches to bear on longstanding crime challenges for lasting change.

Concept Intro: Collective Efficacy, *continued*

Where Efforts to Build Collective Efficacy Have Worked

Berea, KY

This Kentucky Highlands rural site focused on relationship-building and has generated **more than 250 stakeholders and community members** to participate in neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Seattle, WA

More than 100 residents in the Rainier Beach neighborhood participated in a nine-month training program and now comprise a diverse Community Task Force that leads crime reduction strategies in hot spots known for youth violence as part of a place-based approach to address crime driven by the community, rather than police.

Syracuse, NY

Community leaders in the Near Westside neighborhood led **20 projects** to enhance neighborhood safety and cohesion, including a movie night in a local park that was once a location for drug sales and gun violence.

Dayton, OH

The East End neighborhood established a **Graffiti Task Force** that mobilized police, community partners, and residents to replace graffiti with murals that reflect what local youth want to be when they grow up and what residents believe are the best parts of the community.

Resources

For more information on community-oriented safety strategies, visit the LISC website: <https://tinyurl.com/lf923wt>

For more information on collective efficacy and social cohesion, visit the National Institute of Justice website: <https://nij.gov/journals/277/Pages/collective-efficacy.aspx>.

Read "Transforming Individual Civic Engagement into Community Collective Efficacy: The Role of Bonding Social Capital": <https://tinyurl.com/mfqlwo3>

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